

REMARKS

Claims 1-26 are in the application.

Claims 9-12, 21-24 and 26 are withdrawn as being directed to a non-elected species. Applicants herewith confirm election of Species I, claims 1-8, 13-20 and 25.

Claims 1-8, 13-20 and 25 are rejected as being obvious under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being obvious over US 6,047,374 to Barton in view of US 6,633,652 to Donescu.

Claims 1 and 25 are amended to recite the new limitations:

applying a discrimination function to portions of the first subset to classify a regularity of said portion, said discrimination function for a plurality of portions being represented as a vector; reversibly modifying said first subset based on said message and said discrimination function;

losslessly compressing said modified first subset and said vector to form a second subset;

Claim 25 is amended to recite these same limitations using "means for" phraseology.

These new limitations are supported in the specification on page 11, line 21-page 16, line 26. Note in particular page 11, line 28-page 12, line 18.

Note that the "losslessly compressible" limitation has now been used to define the compression, and its appearance as a property of the first set is deemed unnecessary.

These new limitations are derived from claims 6 and 18, however in view of the Examiner's rejection thereof, a more definite description of the discrimination function is provided, that is, it measures the regularity of the portion (e.g., the noise in a group of pixels), and the compression is dependent. Likewise, the compression and concatenation steps are merged, since according to the method, these two steps are not necessarily discrete.

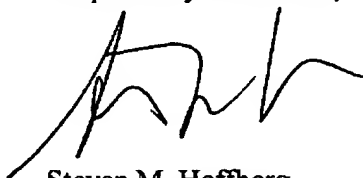
As presently claimed, it is clear that Barton does not teach or suggest a discrimination function which measures a discrimination function which classifies a regularity of portions of the image, as required by the claims, and therefore Barton and the other art of record is believed distinguished thereby.

Claims 6 and 18 are amended to recite the classification of the portions into three classes, as disclosed on page 12, lines 11-13.

It is therefore respectfully submitted that the present claims distinguish the references, and are therefore allowable.

Any additional fees due in connection herewith, or refunds of any overpayments, may be charged to Deposit Account No. 50-0427.

Respectfully Submitted,



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